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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 110: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/55/41 (Supplement No. 41), A/55/201, A/55/297, A/55/442, A/55/162-S/2000/715, A/55/163-S/2000/712, A//55/467-S/2000/973*)

1. **Mr. Gansukh** (Mongolia) said that the Government of Mongolia attached particular importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children because 37 per cent of the country's inhabitants were under 15, and nearly half of them were under 18. While much had been accomplished in the 1990s under the National Programme of Action for the Development of Children, the goals set at the World Summit for Children had by no means been attained as yet. The country was still grappling with the difficulties associated with its transition from a command economy to a market economy, and growing numbers of school drop-outs were becoming street children, poverty- and hunger-stricken. The new Government was giving high priority to social policy, and was making every effort to redress the situation. The Parliament had recently ratified Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and the Government was actively cooperating with ILO under the Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

2. The rising incidence of suicide among adolescents and the appearance of such phenomena as prostitution, alcohol abuse and tobacco abuse were a serious cause of concern. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The information on preventive measures contained in the report was of great interest.

3. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) played an important role in Mongolia, as did other United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, working in close cooperation with their national counterparts to provide services in the fields of primary health care, nutrition, education, child welfare, safe water and sanitation. The Mongolia-UNICEF country programme for the period 1999-2001, for example, included 13 projects relating to child health and nutrition. The visit of the Executive Director of UNICEF to Mongolia in 1999 had foreshadowed further cooperation. The recommendations that had been made following the mid-term review of the country programme had highlighted the importance of integrated implementation of the various programmes and projects for children and coherent interaction among the several organizations involved.

4. The year 2000 had been declared the National Year for Child Development, and a national review of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children had been undertaken. The conclusions of that review would be used in the formulation of the next National Programme of Action for the Development of Children up to the year 2010. The work would be closely coordinated with preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in 2001, from which his delegation expected action-oriented recommendations.

5. **Mr. Melenevsky** (Ukraine) said that the most urgent problems were those of children affected by armed conflicts, children who were the victims of sexual exploitation, disabled children and street children. Those problems could not be solved without an effective strategy against poverty and hunger. The problem of child labour was equally important. It was to be hoped that the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour would enter into force as soon as possible.

6. His delegation greatly appreciated the commendable work performed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the activities of UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It also welcomed the increasing attention paid by the Security Council to the protection of children affected by armed conflicts, and the resolutions it had adopted in that connection. At the Millennium Summit held in New York in September 2000, the President of Ukraine had signed the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

7. Ukraine had actively begun preparations for the special session of the General Assembly that was to be

* To be issued.

convened in 2001. His delegation hoped that that event would result in a better life for children.

8. The fact remained, however, that the leading role in the effective implementation of international instruments should be played by national Governments. The Government of Ukraine gave high priority to the full compliance with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had developed a number of programmes to that end. Unfortunately, the economic crisis currently affecting the country, in conjunction with the aftermath of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant catastrophe in 1986, had had a negative impact on the situation of children. There was new evidence suggesting that certain forms of child leukaemia and other blood disorders, immune system disorders, congenital development abnormalities and chronic diseases were related to the Chernobyl disaster. Accordingly, it was to be hoped that the affected children could rely on the cooperation and support of the international community.

9. **Ms. Beinarovich** (Belarus) said that violations of the rights of children were related to problems of gender equality, economic development, cultural and social rights and family values. In Belarus, the Convention on the Rights of the Child had afforded a means of broadening the legal framework for the protection of children. As a Party to the two Protocols to the Convention, Belarus attached great importance to the protection of children, and had launched a nation-wide information campaign which had yielded positive results. For example, it had become the regular practice both of the authorities and of society at large — in the form of parents, neighbours, teachers and so on — to apply to the courts for assistance in having the rights of children enforced and criminals prosecuted. Moreover, under a programme launched in 1998, various kinds of assistance were being made available to children affected by the Chernobyl nuclear catastrophe, especially those of them who were invalids or orphans. However, the consequences of that catastrophe continued to be a source of grave concern, as the incidence of a variety of disorders among women and children continued to rise. The situation was aggravated by the country's poor economic situation: people were falling prey to nervous depression, values disintegrating and children committing suicide with increasing frequency.

10. A special session of the General Assembly was to be convened in 2001 to review and assess progress since the World Summit for Children. Her delegation hoped that that special session would adopt an effective programme of work for the promotion of the rights of children over the next decade.

11. **Mr. Zhu** (China) said that in Chinese society, great importance was attached to the family. Concern, care and love for children had been traditional since ancient times. In 1990, the Government of China had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thereby demonstrating its commitment to the cause of the protection of children.

12. In the ten years that had elapsed since the adoption of the national Guidelines for the Development of the Child, over 80 per cent of China's 2,800 counties had established agencies responsible for implementing the Guidelines and the Convention, and relevant training had been provided for officials from over 800 counties. The goal of an 85 per cent immunization rate had already been attained in urban areas. The mortality rate for children under 5 years of age had declined from 200 per thousand in the 1950s to 48 per thousand in 1993 and to 39.1 per thousand in 1999. During that decade, polio and smallpox had been eradicated.

13. Universal compulsory education was another objective that had been successfully attained. Approximately 99 per cent of all children of primary school age were attending school, the disparity between enrolment rates for boys and girls had declined from 2.9 per cent in 1990 to 0.1 per cent in 1999, and the drop-out rate had fallen from 2.77 per cent to 0.93 per cent.

14. China, relying only on its own resources, had achieved, or expected to achieve shortly, most of the 24 objectives listed by the Government for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government had submitted its initial performance report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1995, and was preparing the second. It had also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and was considering signing the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Moreover, a new set of Guidelines for the Development of the Child for the years 2001 to 2015 was currently in preparation.

15. The progress made by China in promoting and protecting the rights and interests of children

constituted a major contribution to the welfare of the world's children, inasmuch as Chinese children were one fifth of the total.

16. **Ms. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that the situation of the world's children was an accurate reflection of the gap separating a handful of prosperous countries from the majority of developing countries, which were characterized by poverty and a lack of even the most basic services. Her delegation had submitted its comments on the Secretary-General's report (A/55/163-S/2000/712) at the recent meeting of the Security Council on children affected by armed conflict. Accordingly, she proposed to focus on the report of the Special Representative (A/55/442), although it was regrettable that the delay in publishing the report in question had ruled out an in-depth consideration of its contents.

17. The suffering of children affected by armed conflict confronted the international community with an imperative obligation to work for the restoration of peace and security in regions where such conflicts were raging. To that end, it was essential to protect indigenous value systems conducive to a culture of peace, and to reaffirm the importance of the family as the fundamental unit of society and the primary locus of education. National machinery for the protection of the rights of children must be established, especially in regions affected by conflict. Priority must be given to the protection of displaced children, especially girls. Peace negotiations must be meaningfully supported; all parties must be encouraged to participate, and the protection of children must be placed on the agenda. The protection of children must also be an integral part of post-conflict peace-building and the recovery of the countries involved. Lastly, local non-governmental organizations were indispensable in strengthening the culture of peace and providing social services.

18. The Sudan was a Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and had initiated a national action programme aimed at implementing its provisions relating to education, health, safe drinking water, the legal protection of children, and so on. A High Council for the Protection of Children had been established, and in October 2000 the Executive Director of UNICEF would be coming to launch a second national campaign for the eradication of polio. The Government was currently considering the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and was expected to sign it before the end of the year.

19. The Government of the Sudan attached particular importance to the restoration of peace in the southern part of the country as the only way of re-establishing stability in that region and putting an end to the displacement of its people, including many children. The situation of children in the southern Sudan was a source of grave concern; inter alia, the rebels used them as human shields. The international community was urged to condemn such practices as violations of humanitarian law. The Government was also persuaded of the urgency of coming to the aid of unaccompanied children, reunifying families and putting an end to the labour and exploitation of children. The international community should respond with the utmost severity to the phenomenon of trafficking in children and child prostitution.

20. Her delegation was deeply grieved at the deaths of the numerous Palestinian civilians who had been killed since the end of September in the occupied Palestinian territories, in flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which applied to the territories that had been occupied by Israel since 1967. The acts of aggression being committed against the unarmed Palestinian people and Palestinian children before the eyes of the international community must be stopped, and those responsible for them brought to justice.

21. **Mr. Hadjiargyrou** (Cyprus) said that the Republic of Cyprus had consistently pursued a policy of promoting and protecting children's rights. It had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and had submitted its initial report in 1996. Under the country's Constitution, the provisions of the Convention had precedence over any domestic law. A committee had been established to monitor the Convention and to enlist the support of non-governmental organizations in increasing public awareness of the rights of children. Child welfare programmes had been strengthened, and relevant data were being systematically collected.

22. Cyprus had also ratified many international Conventions, including the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on

Restoration of Custody of Children. His delegation welcomed the adoption, in 1999, of ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the creation of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children.

23. National measures included a series of laws on children and young persons, violence in the family, relations between parents and children, and adoption, and furthermore, the national legal framework took established European Union practice into account. The Government had invested heavily in the areas of education and health: the former accounted for 13.5 per cent of the national budget, while subsidies to programmes operated by non-governmental organizations represented 37 per cent of all State grants.

24. In the area of social protection, the Department of Social Welfare Services implemented policies for families and children, including counselling for families at risk and a variety of cash allowances and services. A Plan of Action for Children covering the period 1999-2004 had been put in place with the general aims of further integrating the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child into the education system and enhancing children's awareness of their rights. The Plan also included the expansion of mental health services and the establishment of Child and Adolescent Departments in the major towns. Other objectives included children's participation in decision-making, the promotion of research, data collection and the dissemination of information on issues relating to children.

25. Unfortunately, Greek Cypriot children living in the part of the island that had been illegally occupied by Turkey since 1974 were unable to benefit from the Plan of Action, and their fundamental right to education was violated, as it was not possible for them to obtain their secondary education locally. Furthermore, every year the occupation regime placed obstacles in the way of the timely delivery of books and other school supplies provided by the Government for Greek Cypriot children attending elementary school in the occupied area.

26. The fact that the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the most widely ratified treaty in the annals of international law showed that Governments possessed the will to pursue policies in the interests of their most vulnerable citizens.

27. **Ms. Raguž** (Croatia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had undoubtedly become the centrepiece of action on behalf of the world's children, and that it had been further bolstered by the two Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which had been adopted in May 2000. Optimal implementation of the Convention would require the involvement, not only of Governments, civil society and the international community, but also of children themselves.

28. Her delegation was looking forward to participating in the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly that was to be convened in 2001. It would be of particular interest to hear about lessons learned from various countries' efforts to implement the Plan of Action that had been adopted at the World Summit for Children in 1990, and about future mechanisms envisaged to identify best practices and major obstacles to implementation.

29. Poverty remained one of the most important human rights challenges, and consequently the effort to eradicate it was a prerequisite for children's exercise of their economic, social and cultural rights. It was most encouraging that a number of key United Nations entities, including UNICEF, ILO and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, had shown effective leadership in combating the exploitation of children. In particular, ILO's adoption of a Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182) was a significant step in the right direction. The right to education, especially primary education for all by 2005, was an indispensable condition for sustainable development, and in that area, it was UNICEF that was leading the way.

30. Her delegation applauded the tenacious efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in highlighting the importance of that issue. The members of the international community should muster the political will required to put an end to such practices as the use of child soldiers. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), the Optional Protocols to the Convention

on the Rights of the Child, the holding of the Conference on War-Affected Children in Winnipeg, and the United Nations initiative to integrate child protection into its peacekeeping mandates. It was to be hoped that that initiative would be further built upon, since the recovery of many war-torn countries would fundamentally hinge on the rehabilitation of those often overlooked members of society, children.

31. **Ms. Fela Al-Rubaie** (Iraq) said that the current session of the General Assembly, coinciding as it did with the Millennium Summit, was an appropriate forum in which to raise a particularly sensitive issue, namely, the fate of millions of children throughout the world who were suffering the consequences of armed conflict, disease, natural catastrophes, international economic sanctions and exploitation in all forms. The Government of Iraq was aware of the importance of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children, and had undertaken to implement it to the letter, despite the serious problems it had been experiencing for some years, including the maintenance of an unjust embargo and acts of armed aggression on the part of the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, Iraq had acceded to the Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1994, and had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in due course. The Committee, realizing the serious situation of children in Iraq and the difficulty of implementing the Convention because of the embargo, had stated in paragraph 62 of the concluding observations which it had adopted on 9 October 1998, "In the light of General Comment No. 8 adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1997) and Decision 1998/114 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the Committee notes that the embargo ... has adversely affected the economy and many aspects of daily life, thereby impeding the full enjoyment by the State Party's population, particularly children, of their rights to survival, health and education." The comprehensive embargo that had been imposed on Iraq had produced a catastrophic impact by causing a substantial decline in the resources available for ensuring the survival of children. As of the end of 1999, there had been a total of 1,250,109 deaths among children of all ages. In June 2000 alone, 15,145 children had died, to say nothing of the serious illnesses, such as cancers, that had resulted from the use of depleted uranium during the 1991 aggression. The situation of children in Iraq had been the subject of a number of UNICEF reports, the most recent of which, in July 1999, indicated that mortality among children under the age of 5 had risen from 56 per 1,000 live births between 1984 and 1989 to 131 per 1,000 between 1994 and 1999. The report also stated that the embargo had reduced children's opportunities for education, recreation and full development of their abilities. The UNICEF representative in Baghdad, for her part, had appeared in March 2000 before the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 661 to present a report on diseases resulting from malnutrition, which had considerably increased over the years. She had asked the Committee to expedite its procedure for approving applications relating to food products, medicines and humanitarian supplies under the Memorandum of Understanding.

32. At a time when the United Nations was undertaking a detailed evaluation of progress toward the goals set out at the 1990 World Summit for Children, Iraqi children were the targets of a crime of genocide, owing to the maintenance of the unjust embargo. The Committee should know that the Secretary of State of the United States, when asked whether the embargo imposed upon Iraq justified the deaths of thousands of innocent children, had replied in the affirmative. In view of the difficulties that Iraq was experiencing in achieving the goals set out at the World Summit, a criterion relating to international sanctions should be introduced into the procedure for evaluating progress toward those goals in the course of the preceding decade, so that all obstacles could be identified; the point was particularly relevant in that the embargo, which had been imposed at the time of the holding of the World Summit, was still in place. It was to be hoped that the Committee would take a stand in favour of fairness toward Iraqi children, so as to put an end to the suffering they had had to endure for 10 years because of the embargo maintained by the United States and the United Kingdom, regardless of the fact that Iraq had fulfilled all its obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions.

33. **Ms. Nicodemos** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the States Members of the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR) and the associated countries (Bolivia and Chile), said that those countries regarded the

promotion and protection of the rights of children as a very important issue, since children and young people accounted for a large percentage of their populations.

34. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was the foundation-stone of their efforts in that area. Since adopting the Convention, they had developed their legal framework to implement its provisions, and were pursuing policies to that end.

35. The States Members of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile had participated in the negotiations leading up to the adoption of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, and several of them had already signed the Protocols or were preparing to do so. The situation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was of concern to them because of the increase in its workload entailed by the almost universal ratification of the Convention, and the further increase that would inevitably follow the entry into force of the two Optional Protocols. Accordingly, they called upon States that had not already done so to indicate their acceptance of the amendment to Article 43, paragraph 2 of the Convention, by which the Committee would be expanded from 10 members to 18.

36. In 2001, a special session of the General Assembly would be convened to evaluate the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted in 1990 at the World Summit for Children. Not only were the States Members of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile participating constructively in the preparations for that session, they were also working to assess progress toward the objectives set in the World Declaration and Plan of Action and to identify the obstacles that had been encountered. Several of them had already attained a number of their medium- and long-term goals.

37. In June 2000, the States Members of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile had signed the Buenos Aires Declaration, whereby they had agreed to implement guiding principles for the protection of children and adolescents, and, to that end, to formulate policies that would take into account the role of the family and the community, and give equal priority to preventive and corrective aspects. They had also agreed to take all necessary measures to meet children's and young people's needs relating to violence and sexual abuse, child labour, early pregnancy, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency.

38. Education was a priority for all the States Members of MERCOSUR and the associated countries. Their policies aimed at universal access to basic education, equal access to education for boys and girls, improving the quality of educational programmes and teaching methods, and reducing drop-out rates.

39. The provision of basic health care for everyone, in particular the poorest members of society, was also a priority. Although child mortality rates were still high in several of their countries, they had been significantly reduced over the preceding decade, mainly because of better prenatal care, breastfeeding and immunization campaigns, school meals programmes and access to potable water and sanitation.

40. **Ms. Nyirinkindi** (Uganda) said that in spite of the international community's increased attention to children, too many children continued to be subjected to appalling physical and mental violence and myriad forms of exploitation. There was an urgent need for greater efforts by the international community and the relevant United Nations bodies to enforce the rights of the child.

41. In northern Uganda, many children continued to be abducted by armed rebels who were members of what was known as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Boys were forced to serve in the ranks of the LRA, while girls were raped and forced to become rebels' wives. Some of the children in question were even sold as slaves. Children who had not been abducted suffered trauma as a result of having witnessed the slaughter of their families and other people and having been forced to leave the country or become internally displaced persons.

42. It was clear from the report on children affected by armed conflict that UNICEF had done a great deal to draw attention to the presence of abducted Ugandan children in the Sudan, and her delegation was duly grateful. However, it was regrettable that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had not included in his report information on the situation of Ugandan children who were still being held by the LRA. Her delegation invited the Special Representative to work with the Government of Uganda. Furthermore, in view of the permanent traumatic effects of armed conflict on children, her delegation urged States that had not yet done so to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of

children in armed conflict. It also urged the international community to ensure that the perpetrators of war crimes against children did not profit from involving children in armed conflict, but were brought to justice. In addition, illicit traffic in arms must be halted, as it abetted such crimes.

43. The Ugandan authorities had taken crosscutting measures to protect the rights of children. The Government had ratified a number of conventions, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and legislation designed to enhance the welfare of children had been enacted. Judges, lawyers and law enforcement officers had received training about the various conventions concerning the protection of the rights of children, and information about them had been disseminated to non-governmental organizations, the media and civil society. In addition, policy-makers were implementing programmes aimed at raising public awareness about children's issues, and clubs had been established in schools to enable children to learn about their rights and teach them how to exercise those rights without neglecting their responsibilities. Moreover, the Government had enacted a Children's Statute, which catered for juvenile delinquents and made provision for their reintegration into society.

44. The health of children and young people was a source of serious concern, and immunization and improved nutrition should be given priority. It was also important to promote breastfeeding and to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS to children during birth. Furthermore, measures were being taken to educate adolescent girls in an effort to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies.

45. Lastly, particular attention should be devoted to the alleviation of poverty, which had an adverse impact on the welfare of children and also affected their self-esteem.

46. **Mr. Reddy** (India) said it was distressing that, despite the commitments made at the World Summit for Children 10 years previously, the number of children living in poverty had steadily increased, while the fruits of prosperity, paradoxically, benefited only a tiny minority of the world's people. Out of the 1.2 billion human beings living in poverty in the world, 600 million were children. Yet if only a small fraction of the $30 trillion global economy were diverted to development initiatives, developing countries could provide the basic services that were crucial to social development and an environment in which children could flourish. For that reason, the special session of the General Assembly which was to be convened in 2001 to consider the situation of the world's children should emphasize greater international development cooperation. It was gratifying that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had confirmed that poverty, particularly child poverty and its relationship with children's involvement in armed conflict, would find attention in his future reports to the Third Committee and other bodies.

47. Some of the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (A/55/1630-S/2000/712) were utopian, others unreasonable, and very few of them were even remotely concerned with the maintenance of peace and security. Recommendation 4, for example, asked for the acceptance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol by armed groups. Unfortunately, there could be no assurance that armed groups, which obeyed no laws, would abide by their commitments, as was apparent from the practices of the rebels in Sierra Leone and the situation in Afghanistan, where the Taliban, through indoctrination, induced children to join the ranks of armed groups or terrorists. Another example was Recommendation 6, which urged Member States to make any assistance, including military assistance, for State or non-State parties to armed conflicts contingent on compliance with international standards relating to the protection of children in armed conflict, as though its objective were to legitimize military support from Member States for groups that set public order at defiance.

48. The report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/55/297) included an account, obtained from a non-governmental organization, of the smuggling of children from Nepal to India. In fact, the traffic in question involved women for the most part, and India had taken measures to put a stop to it. As for the survey referred to in paragraph 47 of the report, it had involved a sample of only 1,000 or so individuals in three towns in the State of Kerala, and thus had obviously been inadequate to do justice to the situation of a nation of over a billion people. Its denial of the link between poverty and prostitution was therefore

questionable. The report also referred to the survey's recommendation of an action plan to rescue children in prostitution, but India had already instituted a nationwide action plan which should afford an effective means of combating child prostitution and trafficking in children.

49. At the regional level, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had prepared a draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. In addition, India was committed to concerted action against the consequences of poverty on children. It had also decided to ratify the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and in that connection had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Lastly, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women had been invited to visit India, where she would have full latitude to look into the question of trafficking in women and girls.

50. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that a country's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child did not, of itself, ensure that the violation of children's rights would cease. Rwanda, for example, had been a Party to the Convention for three years when the outbreak of genocide in 1994 had turned children into both victims and killers. The Government was currently trying, with the limited resources at its disposal, to improve the living standards of Rwandan children, and to that end had granted broader powers to local authorities. Orphans requiring assistance were cared for by the community. National and local authorities were endeavouring to promote tolerance and reconciliation, and the Ministry of Education was revising its curricula accordingly. Children who had participated in massacres were being taken to rehabilitation centres, where reconciliation and respect for life were emphasized. Similarly, psychological support services had been made available, thanks to financial and material contributions from other countries, for children who had witnessed acts of genocide.

51. The Rwandan authorities were providing all possible assistance for children whose parents had died of AIDS. Many of them had been taken in by orphanages, but there were still large numbers who had had to become heads of households. With respect to street children, the efforts of the Government and local non-governmental organizations had not succeeded in solving a problem the sole cause of which was poverty. Its intensity had, however, been mitigated to some extent by the placement of children with foster families. Disabled children had not been overlooked either, but the cost of the necessary infrastructure and equipment was prohibitive. The Government of national unity was committed to the promotion and protection of children's rights. However, the need was so great that the support of the international community would be most welcome.

52. **Mr. Helle** (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that the plight of children affected by armed conflict had become a priority for the international community. The Security Council had adopted two resolutions on the issue, resolution 1261 (1999) and resolution 1314 (2000), and it had been considered at many conferences as well, notably those convened by the Ghanaian and Canadian Governments. The ICRC hoped that the special session of the General Assembly that would be convened in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children would prompt States to make firm and tangible commitments in that regard, and reiterated that it was prepared to cooperate with States, international organizations and other humanitarian agencies in addressing the situation.

53. At the normative level, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols attached great importance to the protection of children, both through provisions relating to the protection of civilian populations and through provisions specifically concerning children. In the field of human rights, there were many treaties that referred specifically to children. The ICRC had taken an active part in the drafting of the instruments in question, notably the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Ottawa Treaty and the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which in Article 8 defined the conscription or enlistment of children under the age of 15 as a war crime. Efforts must focus on the ratification and implementation of those treaties. The ICRC Advisory Service was at the disposal of States to help in the drafting of national legislation for the implementation of international humanitarian law and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol.

54. It was also vital to step up efforts to spread knowledge of the rules. In 2001 the ICRC would be

making available to States and educational organizations a training module expressly designed for young people as part of an initiative entitled "Exploring humanitarian law", launched in cooperation with teachers and experts from about 20 countries. It was an ambitious project aimed at convincing adolescents of the fact that even in war, not everything was permitted. It sought to inculcate the basic elements of humanitarian law and to explain the action taken by individuals, organizations and States to limit the effects of armed clashes, in the hope of making young people aware of their individual responsibility in that regard. Furthermore, in 1999 the ICRC and UNICEF had jointly published an educational module regarding the use of child soldiers and implementation of the law.

55. At the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva in 1999, the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions and the components of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement — namely, the ICRC, the 176 National Societies and their International Federation — had pledged to ensure better protection for children affected by armed conflict. At the operational level, children benefited from special attention, notably in the areas of nutrition and health, under the ICRC's programmes for the civilian population, which provided protection and assistance for families and communities. Wherever circumstances permitted, the ICRC sought to prevent the recruitment of children and their participation in hostilities by making representations to the parties in conflict. It lent support to psychosocial reintegration programmes run by National Societies. Moreover, when visiting detained persons, the ICRC asked the authorities to keep children in separate quarters from adults, and, if possible, to release them.

56. Children were also at the core of the ICRC's efforts to trace missing persons, arrange for the exchange of family messages and reunite dispersed families. The magnitude of the task was such that cooperation with other humanitarian partners was essential.

57. Since the early 1990s, the ICRC had been setting up databases to record information about missing persons and unaccompanied children. During the crisis in Rwanda and the Great Lakes region, for example, it had centralized all the information on unaccompanied children gathered by over 150 organizations. The report of the Secretary-General to the Millennium Assembly had mentioned a project of the International Rescue Committee entitled "Child Connect", which relied on the use of a database to trace missing children. The ICRC, together with other humanitarian organizations, was participating in a working group set up to examine the project, which had been under discussion since 1999, and it had shared with the group its experience in managing personal data, in particular the question of the protection of data and of the individual.

58. **Mr. Röselaers** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the Director-General of the International Labour Office, when appearing before the Committee in October 1999, had urged its members to join the world-wide cause of eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Thanks to the subsequent efforts of Governments, employers' and workers' organizations and non-governmental organizations, 38 countries had already ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, making it the most quickly ratified instrument in ILO's history.

59. Since the beginning of 1999, 30 more countries had ratified ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and ratification procedures were well under way in a good many others. Consequently, there was reason to hope for the universal ratification of those two fundamental instruments.

60. Convention No. 182 applied to all persons under the age of 18. It enjoined Governments to take immediate measures to prohibit all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as debt bondage and serfdom, the use of children for prostitution or for the production of pornography, for the production and trafficking of drugs, and for all work likely to harm their health or safety. Every Member that ratified the Convention was required to take all necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of its provisions, including the enactment and application of penal sanctions. The Convention also stipulated that Members must take appropriate steps to assist one another through international cooperation and support.

61. Since its founding in 1919, ILO had developed a number of standards relating to the elimination of child labour, and Convention No. 138 of 1973, concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment,

remained the basic defining instrument of the Organization's ultimate objective, namely, to eliminate all forms of child labour. Convention No. 182 supplemented existing standards and should afford a means of attaining that objective sooner.

62. Concerning the implementation of ILO Conventions relating to the issue, approximately 70 developing countries that were determined to put an end to the practices in question had made use of the services provided in the context of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). That programme had yielded excellent results, in particular through the formation of partnerships in the country concerned. IPEC received financial and, in some instances, technical support from 25 donors, Governments for the most part, but including some employers' and workers' organizations as well.

63. In the course of the year just past, ILO had substantially extended its cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank. That cooperation was particularly important in that action to eliminate child labour must necessarily be bound up with economic and social policies and take account of the difficult situation of families living in extreme poverty. ILO was participating actively in the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly that was to be convened in September 2001 to review progress made toward achieving the goals set out during the 1990 World Summit for Children.

64. It was ILO's hope that through the enactment of legislation, the provision of technical assistance, and universal cooperation, the 250 million children who were currently compelled to work, including at least 60 million who were condemned to the worst forms of child labour, would be able to have a decent childhood.

Organization of work

65. The Chairperson said that at its twenty-first meeting the Committee would take action on draft resolutions A/C.3/55/L.3, A/C.3/55/L.4 and A/C.3/55/L.5, A/C.3/55/L.7* and A/C.3/55/L.9*, submitted under agenda item 105, and draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.10, submitted under agenda item 106.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.